

**THE EFFECTS OF THE REMEDIAL READING PROGRAM  
AT SPRINGFIELD HIGH SCHOOL  
ON RATE OF LEARNING**

**BY**

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A Research Paper  
Presented to  
the Graduate Council of  
Austin Peay State University

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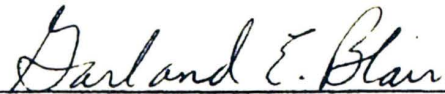
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by  
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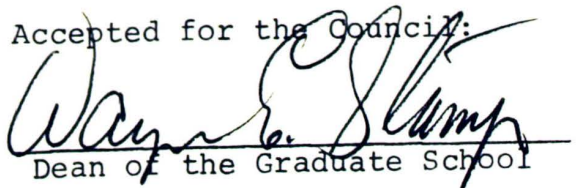
To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Research Paper written by Mary Sue Dodd entitled "The Effects of the Remedial Reading Program at Springfield High School on Rate of Learning." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Counseling and Guidance.



Major Professor

Accepted for the Council:



Dean of the Graduate School

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Reading is defined in many ways. The most common definition is that reading is a process of securing the author's meaning from the printed page and reacting to it. Although it can be defined simply, reading is a complex process which involves the physical, intellectual, and emotional aspects of our being. Dechant (1971) says reading is not a single skill but is rather a group of many interrelated skills which must be applied simultaneously. The reading process is developmental and continuous, building upon past skills, habits, attitudes, and experiences.

Learning to read is an individual process and it is generally agreed that children learn to read at different rates and the progress of the individual varies. Retardation is associated with slower reading progress than is normally expected and with reading capacity that is considerably greater than reading achievement. Bush and Huebner (1970) and McDonald (1971) state that remedial programs have proven to be effective in the reading of basic reading skills. Reading retardation is recognized as a major educational problem.

Studies by Dramer (1970), Wiseman (1970), and Rutherford (1971) have shown that before remedial reading instruction can begin a careful diagnosis of the types and the extent of the reading problems is necessary.

Measuring the results from remedial teaching is essential to the continuing success of the program. Most remedial reading programs are evaluated by measuring difference between pretest and post-test results; some few programs are measured against a control group; less is known about the concept of ratio of learning as a measuring tool.

#### Statement of the Problem

It is agreed that reading is learned and that individuals do not learn at the same rate. It is also agreed that more than half of secondary school learning is through reading. It is assumed that if the reading skills can be improved through a remedial reading class, then the individual's rate of learning should also improve.

The purpose of this study is to determine if the rate of learning increased after remedial reading instruction was given to a group of tenth grade students at Springfield High School for one year.

The subjects involved were enrolled in a remedial reading program for a period of 55 minutes per day, 5 days a week, for a total of 175 days or one school year.



## Significance of the Problem

Remedial reading is being taught in many schools, but the teaching of secondary school remedial reading needs to be justified to the principal, the content teachers, the parents, but most importantly, to the students themselves. The word "remedial" indicates something is wrong causing students and their parents to have negative feelings about joining a remedial reading class. Guidance counselors can positively emphasize the average to above average intelligence requirement of remedial reading and can stress class selection based on ability to read on higher levels than presently reading. This factual assurance will give students a basis for realistic decision making. Most professionals feel that the remedial reading student can improve when given help, and this is often reflected on standardized tests of reading. But based on the concept of ratio of learning, it is assumed that rate of learning will also increase if the reading skills increase. There is need for research to determine if the teaching of remedial reading has any effect on the rate of learning.

## Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to fifty-four tenth grade students at Springfield High School. These students had been chosen for remedial reading by the reading teacher using four criteria--reading achievement score significantly below grade level placement, average or better



intelligence, failing or marginal academic performance in the English content area, and teacher and/or counselor recommendations.

#### Source of Data

The data used in this study were obtained from the reading teacher's diagnostic test results for the school year (1971-72). Only those students who were actually enrolled for the entire year were used in the study.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The communication skills the student acquires are a powerful influence on his life and it is little wonder that the greatest weighting in the curriculum throughout all formal education is given to the communication skills of listening, speaking, writing, and reading. Reading is a developmental task that the pupil must orderly achieve to satisfy the lifetime demands made upon him by education and by society. Failure in reading skills prohibits the actualization of the pupil's potentialities and threatens self-esteem and the pupil's esteem in the eyes of others. Francis Keppel, former U.S. Commissioner of Education, said that every examination of problems of our schools of poverty, every question raised by troubled parents about our schools, every learning disorder seems to show some association with reading difficulties.

Bush and Huebner (1970) found that ninety per cent of a student's work in secondary school involves reading. The proportion of secondary school enrollment significantly retarded in reading varies considerable but the average is estimated to be twenty per cent.

Cehulash (1970) maintains that the high school student who reads below the middle school level is a national problem.

The term "remedial" reading is loosely used to describe a wide variety of reading activities. A basic thesis is that remedial methods are in reality developmental and that remedial reading is not a use of special methods, but a more intense and personal application of those methods that are effective in the regular classroom. Usually, the most apparent difference between the two activities is that pupils are segregated from their classmates for "remedial" instruction but sit in the same room for a "developmental" reading program. Fay (1956) and Graham (1969) report that many programs emphasize the remedial aspects of reading rather than the developmental. They are not aimed at refining reading skills as much as helping the poor reader come up to a minimal level on some of the basic reading skills.

Humphrey (1971), Donze (1971), and Dechant (1971) agree that remedial reading does not exist by itself. It is a part of the total school program, and the staff of a school needs to be told about the program just as much as the general public. Those teachers not directly involved in the program may not understand the purposes of the remedial reading classes and could undermine the program with uninformed opinions passed on to the other



A pupil becomes a remedial case and needs particular help when he cannot participate profitably in classroom learning activities which involve the use of textbooks. Obviously, it is sensible to remove such a pupil from his classroom for a time and to teach him the necessary reading skills more rapidly than he could learn them from the classroom teacher. Howard and Lee (1972) say that students receiving remedial instruction are distinct from normal readers in that they did not learn as a result of the educational procedures that were effective with most students. Because of the correlation that exists between intelligence and reading skill, the remedial teacher must expect to do most of his work with dull-normal and normal pupils. There will always be some remedial cases with above-average intelligence; accordingly, remedial teachers get quick and spectacular results with these pupils and they are attracted to the notion that they could most rewardingly expend all their efforts on these pupils. There are too many slower learners who need the kind of help which is hard to give in the large classroom. These pupils often make better than what we regard as normal or expected progress. Students through grade 12 whose I.Q.'s are 90 or above, and who are a full year or more retarded in one or more reading skills for their grade placement, are given first consideration for remedial work because of their potential for normal school progress.

In recent years it seems that there has been a continuous search for programs or materials that would offer the solution to reading problems. Still there are students who cannot read satisfactorily. Rutherford (1971) suggested that the search for solutions in a set of materials or a prepared program be de-emphasized and that the teachers place increased emphasis on those elements already known to be essential to effective reading instruction.

Humphrey (1971) stated that the remedial reading teacher will need both informal and standardized tests to diagnose a student's reading problems. Several commonly used methods of measuring pupil progress in remedial programs leave something to be desired. For example, teachers look at the pretest, post-test results of individual students on group tests. Ekwall (1972) maintains that because of the rather large standard error of individual scores on group achievement tests, any true gain a pupil may have made during a school year may be very difficult to interpret. Another method that has been used in researching the effectiveness of remedial reading is to use a control group. This method, while offering a number of advantages, also has some disadvantages. One major disadvantage is that there must be a control group at all. In a small school one may not wish to deprive the control groups of the benefits of a program simply

for the sake of measuring any possible significant differences in post-test results between the two groups.

Ekwall (1972) explained a method of accessing gains in remedial reading which is relatively easy to interpret to administrators and parents and which seems valid in terms of either justifying or not justifying expenditures for special programs. This method deals with students' ratio of learning. The ratio of learning is a measurement of students' learning rate prior to entering a special program versus their learning rate while they are in the program. Because of the unreliability of group test scores for individual students, a teacher should determine the ratio of learning for the entire case load, or all students in a special program, rather than individual students.

Graham (1969) stated that only about twenty-five per cent of schools with reading programs report some type of follow-up of students after they left the reading program. Some schools give evidence of truly longitudinal study of student progress in reading. Reading programs were evaluated primarily by scores on standardized tests.

Special emphasis should be placed on evaluation of the total reading program. Wiseman (1970) stated that evaluation of the reading programs reflected the general opinion that the reading skills instructional programs are beneficial and gave hope for helping the disabled high school reader.



### CHAPTER III

#### PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

The main purpose of this study was to determine the effect of remedial reading on rate of learning. Fifty-four students enrolled in the tenth grade remedial reading program at Springfield High School were chosen for the study. These students were enrolled in remedial reading class during the 1971-72 school year with the remedial reading program lasting for the entire year. The general approach in the reading class was characterized by individual diagnostic teaching of specific reading skills. Each student's strengths and weaknesses were examined on a continuing basis.

Students were chosen for special instruction in reading primarily through the use of teacher and counselor recommendations, grades, mental ability, and scores on standardized tests. Student and parent desires were also considered. When teachers recognized students in the English content area that evidenced a reading weakness which hampered his progress, they usually referred this student.

Tenth-grade pupils were selected for the program on the basis of failing or marginal academic performance,

a reading score significantly below grade level placement, an average or better intelligence and teacher/counselor recommendation. The mean IQ was 90 and the mean reading score for these tenth-graders was 8.2 grade level. The widest gap between intelligence and reading level was exhibited by a pupil with an IQ score of 114 and a standardized reading test score of 8.5 grade level.

Each student was given the option of participating; and out of 60 students selected, 54 chose to enroll.

The special reading instruction took the place of regular sophomore English class and received a full Carnegie unit for a year's work.

Mechanical devices used included controlled readers, tape recorders, tachistoscope, pacer, record player, and projectors.

Diagnosis of specific reading problems were conducted during the year and students were individually taught only those skills and knowledge that each needed.

Examples of appropriate materials used included E.D.L Study Skills-Science, Social Science, and Reference-Levels three thru nine (Educational Development Laboratories), Reader's Digest Skill Building, New Practice Readers, and Scholastic Scope Magazine. A complete list of materials used would be too lengthy to include. The teacher personally developed some materials for diagnostic purposes.

The remedial reading program was quite specific and dealt with each individual student's reading problems--not the group as a whole.

#### Collection of Data

The data in Table I were obtained from the cumulative files of the special reading teacher for the school year 1971-72. All except three IQ scores were obtained from the Lorge-Thorndike Intelligence Test given in 1970. The others were collected from the 1966 records. The California Reading Test, Form A and Form B, was administered as the pretest and post-test, respectively. The students' IQ scores were placed on a grid and Table I shows the difference between the pretest and post-test reading placement scores.



TABLE I

## Reading Placement by Grade Level

	6.5 to 6.9	7.0 to 7.4	7.5 to 7.9	8.0 to 8.4	8.5 to 8.9	9.0 to 9.4	9.5 to 9.9	10.0 to 10.4	10.5 to 10.9	11.0 to 11.4
I. Q.										
116										
115										
114					x		o			
113										
112										
111										
110		x	o		x		o			
109										
108										
107										
106										
105				x				o		
104										
103						x		o		
102			xx				oo			
101				x	x		o	o		
100										
99					x		o			
98										
97						xxo	x			oo
96		x		x	o		o			
95				xx	x	oo		o		
94					x			o		
93	xx			oo						
92					x	x	oo			
91				x	xo	o				
90			o	x						
89	x	x			o	o				
88			x			o				
87	x	xxo	xo	o	x	o	o			
86					x		x			
85		x	xo	xx	o	oo				
84										
83				x	xo	o				
82		xxoo		xxxoo		x	oo			
81				x	o					
80				x		o				
79		x	o							
78			xx	o	xo	o				
77		x		o						

x=Pretest Results  
o=Post-test Results

## METHOD

Eldon E. Ekwall's (University of Texas) method of accessing gains in a remedial reading program was utilized.

Step 1. Determine the average number of years that all students to be tutored have been in school at the beginning of the program.

Step 2. Determine the average number of years of achievement of the group when they enter the program.

Step 3. Divide the average number of years of achievement by the average number of years the students have been in school.

Step 4. Determine how long the students were in the remedial program.

Step 5. Determine the average student gain during the tutorial period.

Step 6. Determine the ratio of learning during the tutoring period by dividing the amount gained during the program by the number of years (or months) the students were in the program.

Step 7. Compare students' ratio of learning before entering the special program with their ratio of learning during the program.

## CHAPTER IV

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to test a method of accessing gains in remedial reading which is relatively easy to interpret to teachers, administrators, and especially to students and parents. The ratio of learning is a measurement of learning rates prior to entering a special program versus their learning rate while they are in the program. Because of the unreliability of group test scores for individual students, care should be taken to determine the ratio of learning for the entire case load, or of all the students in a special program.

The subjects used in the study were enrolled in the tenth grade remedial reading program at Springfield High School in the Robertson County school system. Fifty-four students were enrolled in the program for the entire 1971-1972 academic year. The students participating in the program were selected by four criteria: Mental ability scores, standardized reading test scores, previous years academic (English) grades, and teacher/counselor recommendation. The study was conducted at the end of one entire school year of remedial reading instruction.



The average number of years in school was 9.3 years with the average number of years of achievement being 7.03 years. The ratio of the students' learning prior to entering the remedial reading program was 0.75, the average amount of gain per pupil during the remedial period being 1.07 years. The ratio of learning during this special program was 1.337.

### Conclusions

The ratio of learning is a method of measuring a group's rate of learning (amount learned per year or per month) before entering a special program versus the rate of learning during a special program.

Any ratio of learning that was greater than 0.75 (the student's ratio of learning prior to the special remedial reading program) would indicate an improvement in this group's rate of learning.

Although the data showed that the students' rate of learning did improve during the tenth grade school year, it is not entirely possible to determine if this is due to the remedial reading program, or to the contribution of such variables as individualized instruction, improved teacher/student ratio, teacher warmth and understanding, or the readability of the materials.

A note of cautious optimism can be sounded for the Springfield High School remedial reading program. Change has occurred although it has not been outstanding.

### Recommendations

Based on the review of the literature and this study, the following recommendations should be considered:

1. Reading programs are evaluated primarily by scores on standardized tests. More attention should be given to evaluating other factors--i.e., rate of learning, improved school adjustment, and increased voluntary reading.
2. Continued emphasis should be placed on remedial aspects of reading on the secondary level.
3. The ratio of learning method is an easily interpreted means of measuring the gain/loss of a special program and should be used by counselors, especially for student/parent/teacher conferences.
4. Teachers and administrators should be aware of one apparent defect in this ratio of learning method. This is the assumption that all the students in the reading program have learned and are still learning at the same rate of speed day by day, month by month.

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